

MAY 10, 1976

INDIAN-PAKISTANI TALKS

ANNCR:

INDIA AND PAKISTAN HAVE TAKEN ANOTHER STEP TOWARD NORMAL RELATIONS ... AS WE HEAR IN THIS BACKGROUND REPORT BY VOA'S JOSEPH SULLIVAN.

VOICE:.

ON WEDNESDAY, (MAY 12) INDIAN FOREIGN SECRETARY JAGAT METHA WILL BEGIN TALKS IN ISLAMABAD WITH HIS PAKISTANI COUNTERPART, AGHA SHAHI. THE MEETING REPRESENTS THE FIRST FORMAL NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN INDIA AND PAKISTAN IN MORE THAN A YEAR. FROM ALL REPORTS, THE MAJOR ITEM ON THE AGENDA IS THE RESUMPTION OF AIR LINKS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES AND THE RIGHT OF ONE COUNTRY'S COMMERCIAL AIRCRAFT TO FLY OVER THE OTHER'S TERRITORY. THE AIR LINKS WERE TERMINATED IN 1971. AND IT WAS THE INABILITY TO REACH A SOLUTION TO THIS QUESTION THAT LED TO THE BREAKDOWN IN NEGOTIATIONS HELD IN NEW DELHI LAST MAY.

THE IMPASSE WAS BROKEN LAST MONTH WHEN PRIME MINISTER BHUTTO OFFERED TO WITHDRAW A COMPLAINT THAT PAKISTAN HAD PENDING AGAINST INDIA BEFORE THE INTERNATIONAL CIVIL AVIATION ORGANIZATION REGARDING THE SUSPENSION OF OVERFLIGHTS. PRIME MINISTER INDIRA GHANDI -- RESPONDING TO THE BHUTTO INITIATIVE -- OFFERED TO RESUME DISCUSSIONS ON A WIDE ARRAY OF SUBJECTS INCLUDING AIR LINKS, OVERFLIGHTS, THE RESUMPTION OF RAIL AND ROAD COMMUNICATIONS, AND EVEN RENEWED DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS.

INDIA AND PAKISTAN BROKE OFF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS DURING THE 1971 WAR WHICH RESULTED IN INDEPENDENCE FOR BANGLADESH. THE FOLLOWING YEAR, INDIAN AND PAKISTAN LEADERS, MEETING

AT SIMLA, WORKED OUT A PHASED AGREEMENT TO END THE HOSTILITY THAT DATES FROM THE CREATION OF THE TWO COUNTRIES. THE SIMLA ACCORD CONTAINS THE OUTLINE OF A MOVE TOWARD NORMAL RELATIONS, INCLUDING AGREEMENTS THAT WOULD COME ALONG THE WAY. SOME OF THESE HAVE ALREADY BEEN CONCLUDED SUCH AS THE RESUMPTION OF TRADE LINKS AND POSTAL SERVICE BETWEEN PAKISTAN AND INDIA.

PAKISTAN'S MINISTER OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, AZIZ AHMED, SAID HIS COUNTRY HAS SET NO CONDITIONS FOR RE-ESTABLISHING DIPLOMATIC TIES. NONETHELESS, OFFICIALS OF BOTH COUNTRIES HAVE CAUTIONED THAT THE TALKS IN ISLAMABAD MAY NOT PROVE EASY. CORRESPONDENT WILLIAM BORDERS, WRITING FROM ISLAMABAD FOR THE "NEW YORK TIMES", SAYS THE VIEW FROM BOTH NEW DELHI AND THE PAKISTANI CAPITAL IS THAT THERE IS LITTLE HOPE FOR PROGRESS ON SOME OTHER PARTS OF THE SIMLA ACCORD, NOTABLY THE DECLARATION IN FAVOR OF A FINAL SETTLEMENT OF THE BORDER DISPUTE IN KASHMIR. STILL, FOREIGN OBSERVERS ARE CAUTIOUSLY OPTIMISTIC THAT THE ISLAMABAD NEGOTIATIONS WILL INCREASE THE CHANCES OF ACHIEVING STABILITY IN THE INDIAN SUBCONTINENT.

GH/PBM